



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Community Engaged Learning
Student Affairs

2023-24



Student Directed Seminars: Program Guide





About Student Directed Seminars

Student Directed Seminars provides undergraduate students (3rd year or more) the opportunity to propose, coordinate, and facilitate their own 3-credit seminar class with a small group of peers on a topic not currently offered at UBC.

Through this, students have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty, and develop skills such as curriculum-writing, peer-to-peer learning, and critical thinking.



Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the support of the members of the 2023/24 Advisory Committee:

- Dr. José Rodriguez (he/him), 2023/24 SDS Program Chair, Associate Professor of Teaching (Chemistry)
- Adrija Chakrabarti (she/her), Student Coordinator 2020/21 (Integrated Science)
- Jeff Miller (he/him), Senior Associate Director, Projects and Faculty Partnerships (CTLT)
- Dr. Sarika Bose (she/her), Lecturer (English)
- Emmett Mark (he/him), Student Coordinator 2020/21 (Integrated Arts)
- Kip Chow (they/them), Student Coordinator 2020/21 (English and Psychology)
- Kyle Nelson (he/him), Community Engaged Learning Officer (CCEL)
- Sheker Mammetsgurban (she/her), Learning Initiatives Coordinator (CCEL)
- Alex Martin (he/him), Student Coordinator 2022/23 (Forestry)
- Dr. Santokh Singh (he/him), Professor of Teaching (Botany)
- Dr. Nesrine Basheer (she/her), Assistant Professor of Teaching (Asian Studies)
- Sunny Gong (she/her), Student Coordinator 2021/2022 (Science)

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Seminars Offered

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Cyberpsychology and Digital Technology Addiction

ASTU 400K 201 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Luke Clark Term: 2

Do you struggle to put down your phone? Or to click away from shopping sites when you should be taking notes in class? Does that make you “addicted” to technology? This course will examine topics in cyberpsychology – the study of psychological experiences in human-technology interactions – with a focus on behavioral addictions to technology. Whether humans can be “addicted” to behaviors is still debated, but a growing literature acknowledges the addictive designs of digital technologies, their impact on users, and their implications for health and policy. This seminar will explore and inspire critical thought about the latest research on this topic. Readings will consist of journal articles in cognitive and clinical psychology, ethics, public health, and UI/UX design. Class time will be spent on group discussions and activities. We welcome students of all majors who are motivated to learn and engage in small peer groups.

Student Coordinator



Cindy Zhang (she/her)
Psychology

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I work in research related to social media and smart technologies, including social robots!
2. Before my interests in cognitive science, I was very into literature and creative writing.

What are you most excited about?

I'm excited about getting together students who are also interested in this topic and educating ourselves together about the technologies surrounding us. Hopefully we will also learn strategies to navigate technology use that we can implement in our own lives.



Exploring the Concept of Progress in History

PHIL 488 001 🗨️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sylvia Berryman Term: 2

Every year the United Nations releases a “Sustainable Development Goals Report,” which “provides a global overview of progress” towards a list of goals. The 2022 report tells us that, thanks to COVID, “years or even decades of development progress have been halted or reversed.” The question that this seminar seeks to answer is what precisely is meant by “global progress”? What, precisely, is progressing? Is there a time when the world will have progressed sufficiently? What would it mean not to progress? Is progress “merely” a social or political convention, or can it be said to exist in some other way? Must progress “exist” in order to be pursued? In other words, we will investigate the nature of progress itself and what role it plays in the world.

Student Coordinator



Nick Halme (he/him)
Philosophy

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I previously worked on videogames!
2. My great grandfather on my father's side was Finnish, but my last name is technically Swedish--many Finns speak Swedish, and so it is a very common name in Finland. The family story has it that the name was changed from "Hyttinen" (hyoo-tee-eye-nen) to "Halme" to avoid being mistaken for a German name; it was felt to sound too foreign.

What are you most excited about?

Both of these perspectives (Hegel's notion of progress and the problem of progress in philosophy) are there in the seminar, and so I am very curious to see whether my peers feel that these issues are two aspects of the same issue to do with progress, or whether they are actually different in some way.



Introduction to Eastern European Philosophy

PHIL 486 001 🖱 Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Veta Chitnev

Term: 2

The academic focus of this student-directed seminar is to introduce students to a variety of diverse philosophical thoughts that have been occurring in Eastern European Philosophy since the 18th century. Throughout the course, we will cover some of the most influential Eastern European philosophers from the 18th century until the present from Russia, Serbia, Poland, Ukraine, and other regions. Readings include original texts in translation as well as peer-reviewed secondary sources that will help students understand the nuances of examined texts.

Student Coordinator



Artem Meshcherin (he/him)
Philosophy

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I was mentioned in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto in 2018 as a National Champion that year.
2. I tend to keep my belongings to a minimum amount except for two things: books and wine (predominately red).

What are you most excited about?

Having an opportunity to examine the topic of my seminar with other students and discuss findings together.

What drew you to your seminar topic?

It is hard to select one particular thing for me but perhaps it is predominantly a personal interest in the subject of the seminar that was substantially influenced by my [Russian] background.



The Politics of Policing in Canada & the United States

POLI 308Z 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Carey Doberstein Term: 2

In recent years, public discourse regarding policing in Canada and the United States has gained considerable momentum. Spanning the 2020 protests sparked by the police killing of George Floyd, the recent sweeps of the unhoused population in the Downtown Eastside, and the 2023 National Inquiry into the Nova Scotia mass shooting, the institution of policing has been called into question. In this course, we will examine and critically engage with the policing systems in Canada and the United States as they exist today and through history. We will aim to situate the media events that have defined recent years in the history of policing, various theories of it, and alternatives to policing.

Student Coordinators

Maya
Buchanan
(she/her)
Political
Science



Arsh Singh
(he/him)
Political
Science

What are two fun facts about you two?

1. Maya: Two fun facts about myself are that I am the oldest of four sisters and received my blackbelt in Karate in high school.
2. Arsh: I can solve a Rubik's cube and I like sci-fi books.

What are you both most excited about?

Maya: The SDS format provides a unique cooperative learning opportunity...! I enjoy learning from my peers and their own research and lived experience, and think that this course will be a great forum for fostering that.

Arsh: Discussing intricate topics with my peers and talking about alternatives or amendments to the existing police formula.



The Psychology of Modern Dating

ASTU 400M 201 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Steven Barnes Term: 2

Technological communication is seemingly impacting all aspects of human experience. In this seminar we will be diving into the psychology behind dating apps, websites and social media to answer the question: What are the new dating scripts within technological platforms and how are they changing our pre-existing dating behaviours? This course will compare online and offline dating psychology to analyze the impacts of technology on dating practices. We will be exploring concepts of self marketing, online attraction, matching algorithms and digital courtship through scientific articles and textbook "The Psychology of Modern Dating" (2020) by psychologist Shawn Blue. The course syllabus is inclusive to all sexuality, gender and identity experiences.

Student Coordinator



Nahanni Musiani (she/her)
Neuroscience

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I am a very outdoorsy person: I love to ski, hike and camp.
2. I am also trilingual and may do a masters in Italy.

What are you most excited about?

I am most excited about the discussion aspect of the seminar. I am excited in these sessions to learn from a plethora student perspectives on the debate of technology in dating.

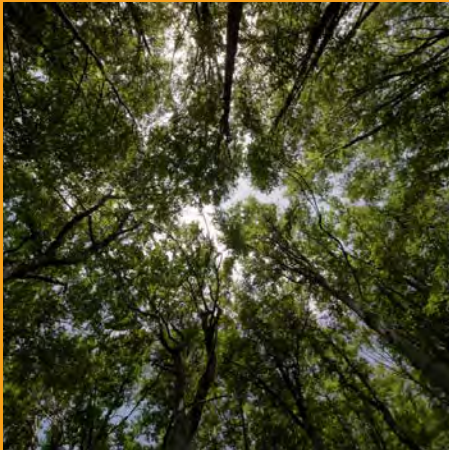


Topics in Environmental Aesthetics

PHIL 487 001 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Dominic Lopes Term: 2

Aesthetics is a subdiscipline within philosophy that incorporates areas of judgement, value, and ethics into aesthetic experience of art and the environment. However, the considerations applied to environmental aesthetics are unique and require distinct attention compared to works of art like paintings. This seminar introduces various topics in environmental aesthetics such as Kantian attitudes, issues of objectivity, cultural divergence, and the experience of the natural environment from gardens to animals. Each week presents a new topic that highlights a contended or important position within environmental aesthetics, providing a diverse collection of perspectives. This is a discussion-based course where participants will share their research and visit local sites for a real-world experience of natural aesthetics.

Student Coordinator



Rayva Nelson (she/her)
Political Science & Philosophy

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I like cats.
2. I like traveling.

What are you most excited about?

Being able to utilize in-person sites at UBC (Nitobe for example).

What drew you to your seminar topic?

A personal interest in aesthetics/philosophy and theories of art.



Philosophy in Hip-Hop/Rap Music

PHIL 489 001 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Anders Kraal Term: 2

In this course we will examine a variety of philosophical topics through the lens of hip-hop/rap music. We will apply a two-eyed seeing approach to our inquiries, where we will discuss these topics with one eye focused on songs by a variety of rap artists and the other eye focused on philosophical works from the Western philosophical thought. We will situate the birth of hip-hop/rap in its historical context as a fundamentally African-American art form, and we will seek to understand how this context might contribute to the often anti-oppressive and at times hyper-individualistic worldviews projected through in this music. We will use these discussions to help elucidate the variety of social and personal functions that rap music serves.

Student Coordinator



Oliver Bontkes (he/him)
Philosophy & Psychology

What are two fun facts about you?

1. I really like chickens (and animals in general really)
2. I'm a 2100 rated chess player (got a little obsessed during COVID)

What drew you to your seminar topic?

I love rap music, especially rap music that deals with serious philosophical topics. I really wanted to discuss the ideas presented in this art form with others who take the ideas seriously in an academic setting.



Psychedelics & Sacred Plant Medicines: Holistic and Neurobiological Approaches

ASTU 400L 201 🖱️ Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Lilian May Term: 2

The intention of this seminar is to create a space for a deep academic exploration of critical facets of psychedelics, including function at the neurobiological level, ethical considerations regarding Indigenous knowledge systems and traditional uses, therapeutic potentials, and harm reduction. It emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of the distinct properties and effects of various psychedelics while illuminating the potential of the psychedelic renaissance to shape an inclusive collective future from multi-disciplinary perspectives. This seminar integrates common frameworks such as behavioral neuroscience, neurobiology, psychology, and holistic therapy while touching on areas such as consciousness, existential psychology, and philosophy of the conception of the self.

Student Coordinators

Dana Hunter
(she/her)
Psychology



Kailey
Baxstrome
(she/her)
Cognitive
Systems

What are two fun facts about you two?

1. Dana: I freedive, and do research with wild dolphin communities.
2. Kailey: Two fun facts about myself are that I drive a motorcycle and am forklift-certified!

What are you both most excited about?

Dana: Learning the articles and from the participants as we deeply consider these complex subjects.

Kailey: Co-creating alongside my co-coordinator and students an offering that does justice to the power and importance of sacred plant medicines... I also look forward to diving into the literature and promoting a deeper inquiry into what psychological healing can look like.



Contact Us

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